

CHURCHES

SLOWLY DYING BECAUSE OF INDIFFERENCE OF PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS.

New York, March 4.—In an address which was the feature of the fourth annual meeting of the Baptist Social Union of New York, Rev. Russell H. Conwell, D. D., pastor of the Baptist Temple, of Philadelphia, has declared that modern churches are dying slowly but surely because of indifference of pastors and congregations.

"The modern Christian church," he said, "is becoming submerged, because of laxity. Pastors are growing indifferent and congregations are all the time becoming smaller. There are too many movements, too many offshoots and differing phases of creed. The result is that the parent church is dying. The only reason that the young man goes to church nowadays is because he knows that his best girl is there."

"The Y. M. C. A. is more prosperous than the church because it is made attractive with its books and gymnasiums with a true Christian spirit with hospitals and colleges the sectarian spirit is waning. Men who make large endowments are a rule, stipulate that the institutions they help shall be non-sectarian. If the church is to live we must come back to the first teachings of Christ."

The above is, in several particulars, exactly the sentiment of infidel propagandists regarding the Christian religion and some of it is quite contrary to what we believe and teach. Is it not possible, at, if each of us would make all the concessions we reasonably and honestly can, we could come together and combine our efforts to do good and quit our disputing about supernatural and unnatural things?

I would hardly say as much against the church as Rev. Conwell does. I would amend some of his statement. The church, in one sense is dying not "slowly," it is dying very rapidly—almost dead, if we are to judge the church by what it was fifty years ago. The church has been almost entirely revolutionized in the last half century, both in its doctrines and in its practice.

Fifty years ago almost everybody believed that every word in the Bible was absolutely accurate, in dictation and in sentiment; that this was not only true of the Bible in its original languages, but was true of its translations. Now scarcely anybody believes in the infallibility of the Bible. Regarded in that light the church is now almost dead and is moribund.

In another sense, however, the church is more alive than it ever was. Now scarcely any preacher depends upon preaching the gospel to attract attention and interest. They preach about politics, Mount Pelee eruptions, fires, Iroquois and Baltimore, and wars and tell whether they are for the Japs or the Russians. There are also many sermons in which the preachers teach the people that they are not to believe the Bible is infallible as they used to do. Chaplains in Congress and in State legislatures, put into their prayers political "log rolling" for their special views of political measures, and the preachers, in order to attract attention, advertise in the newspapers sensational topics for their coming sermons, but nobody ever saw one of these where a preacher simply published that he was going to preach the gospel. It would keep people from going to church and give such a preacher the reputation of being a mossback and a crank.

But the church is paying more and more for its preachers. They must be handsome men who dress in fine taste and wear nice clothes, and they must be graceful orators and men of attractive manners, and they must be popular in fashionable society.

The churches are being built finer and finer all the time, in America, at least, and they are paying more and more music, instrumental and vocal, and for flowers and the church is, all the time, getting to be more and more age, to a successful issue, the affairs dress and jewelry, and in this sense, the church is more alive than it has ever been.

The church as much as ever—not more than ever, because that would be impossible—is the place where "the young man goes, because he knows his best girl is to be there," and is the place where the papas and mammas go to watch and help manage, to a successful issue, the affairs of the young man and his best girl.

Except for these purely secular auxiliaries the church would now be absolutely "a dead one," but with them it is an exceedingly live corpse. I am not condemning these things so much as I am insisting that they are not, justly, to be set down to the

credit of religion when we are estimating the church's influence upon the world. I love music, and flowers, and fine oratory and I love my "best girl" both before and after taking, and I simply say the Christians should render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's, and I think that Caesar owns a majority of the stock in the church.

Now I will show where Rev. Conwell does injustice to the facts in the case. He alludes to books, gymnasiums, hospitals and colleges as being in keeping with Christianity, whereas neither Jesus nor any of his apostles ever said a word, or wrote a line to encourage education, and none of them ever even heard the word hospital or colleges, while it is certainly true that the first hospitals were built by Mohammedans, while for hospitals for the insane, neither Jesus nor any of his disciples knew anything about the nature of insanity, but called insanity possession of devils, and the New Testament teaches not only that these devils could be cast out by religion, and by prayer and fasting, but that these devils, on one occasion, having been cast out of an insane man or two insane men—the accounts disagree—got into two thousand hogs causing the hogs to drown themselves in the sea.

If Jesus and his apostles ever then, even heard of gymnasiums they were in connection with the athletics of the heathen Greeks and Romans. Nobody ever heard of any such things among the Jews.

The Jews took a good deal of physical exercise, but nearly all of it was with swords in killing somebody.

Going into the modern athletics is then, by no means, anything like "going back to the first teachings of Christ," where none of these things were known.

Of all the follies of the age, I hardly know of any that are more irrational than the gymnastics of the Y. M. C. A.'s, and the base ball, foot ball and basket ball of our colleges and universities.

They are develop, if they develop at all, muscles and energies and powers for which there is no use in practical life. A young man who can command a good salary as a base ball player, cannot cut stove wood, or turn a grindstone, or drive a hog out of a corn field and though he can hit a ball with a bat he cannot hit a nail on the head with a hammer, and will wash his thumb and cuss if he tries to do so.

There is no town that has in it a college, male or female, that would give, to all of its students, healthful and valuable employment for which it would be willing to pay, and one-tenth of the cost of gymnasiums and Y. M. C. A. buildings would buy ground for farms and gardens and shops and tools where boys and girls could work and do something beautiful and valuable with a tythe of the labor that these young people undergo, and thus induce, perhaps, this infernal appendicitis that seems to have come in with people straining themselves in unnatural positions in gymnasiums.

A young fellow comes out of colleges with a muscle on him that took his years and thousands of dollars to produce and then you may give him a good mule and a good plow and he can't plow a row of corn. He can stand on his head and turn somersaults, but he can't think, corn because it makes him dizzy to hold his head down. He can pull a car in a racing boat but he can't pull a cross-cut saw.

The church with its Y. M. C. A. is teaching that exercise in a gymnasium is all right and dignified but that honest manual labor is a thing for a young man to be ashamed of.

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"BRO. BARNES"

QUITES WORK IN MOUNTAINS FOR SHORT VACATION IN WASHINGTON—WILL COME AGAIN

Rev. Geo. O. Barnes, the "mountain evangelist," and known from one end of the state to the other as "Brother Barnes," passed through the city last night on his way to Washington, D. C., to make a short visit to his daughter, Miss Marie Barnes. "Brother Barnes" has been preaching in Brethitt county for the past two weeks and says that he has accomplished much good among the mountaineers. He is about eighty years of age now, but still has the fire and eloquence of his younger days, when, breaking away from the established tenets of the Presbyterian church, he preaching to thousands the doctrine of "God's Love and Nothing Else."

Since then as the years have passed heavily over his head the aged divine has shifted his views with the times and tides. For a while he took Christ's words, "He that believeth in me shall not die, but shall have everlasting life, in their literal sense and announced that he would live forever. Later he embraced Darwinism, but receiving the cold shoulder from Elijah III, again took up the work in his own way and has since devoted a good portion of his time to work among the mountaineers of Kentucky.

"Brother Barnes" says that he has been in this part of the country when the feudal troubles were at their height in Brethitt he would have gone there with the soldiers and preached his doctrine to the mountaineers. He has just finished a meeting in the mountain city and on his return from Washington will begin a crusade at Beattyville to extend throughout the balance of the winter and the spring. He will again traverse the mountainous region and it is possible that Miss Marie and her little organ may join him later.

The above is from the Lexington Democrat, the editor of which is now a rich man having made his start as editor of a little backwoods paper called the Interior Journal, edited at Stanford, and the paper gained its popularity solely by "Brother Barnes" reporting the miracles that were being worked by Barnes at his "Pink Cottage."

I have nothing against Walton and would not say so if I had because I do not want any superfluous holes through my hide and the Democrat is being civil to the Blade, and, by the way in its issue of Feb. 27, under the head "Another view of the Powers case," has one of the very strongest editorials I have ever seen in any newspaper and I have been seeing editorials for many a long year.

Walton's editorial about Barnes is kind, but Walton ought to bring Barnes and Miss Marie and the famous "little organ" all to Lexington and give all three of them a nice home for the balance of their lives and he would make money by it, for all old and intelligent citizens in Kentucky know that Barnes made Walton's fortune for him.

Twenty years ago Barnes would come to Lexington and the most aristocratic families in Lexington and the hotels of Lexington, all vied with each other as to which would have the honor of entertaining him for nothing and his friends too, and give him and his family elegant presents besides and the same was true in Louisville and every other town in the state besides and he was furnished with money to take him and his family around the world three times, and they all went; one rich English woman going with him and putting her fortune at their disposal and my first cousin, Colonel John H. Morgan furnishing them thousands of dollars, and dying a pauper himself, and another of my cousins, son of a splendid judge went to a lunatic asylum crazed by Barnes' preaching, and died from it. I have seen the biggest opera houses in Louisville just packed like sardines in a can with the aristocracy of Louisville, men and women, day and night, and for weeks at a time who were there to see Barnes miraculously cure all sorts of diseases and blindness and cripples by anointing them from a nice little bottle that had been presented him for that purpose, and which he carried in his vest pocket. Barnes properly quoting the New Testament, James V.14, as his authority for this, and the Courier Journal, the most influential newspaper in the South, made thousands of dollars, by printing that these miracles were genuine and true, and I saw with my own eyes, finely dressed men and women all over that theater, rise in their seats, and call out that they were converted to the Christian religion because of the miracles they witnessed there and then.

All that time I stood alone, saying then, just as I do now, that I did not know whether Barnes' was insane or a knave or a combination of both and I was met on the streets of Lexington by a Christian and insulted and threatened for saying it. Now poor old "Brother Barnes" has been deserted until he cannot preach anywhere in Kentucky, except at some place where the rich preachers will not go, because there is no money in it, and the poor old fellow passes through Lexington with "none so poor as to do him reverence."

There is only one reason in the

HOW THE JAP-RUSSIAN WAR IS MAKING INFIDELS

The war between Japan and Russia seems very brutal and irrational but I am reminded of the Shakespearean travesty that says, "There are sermons in books, stones in brooks and good in everything."

The good in this Eastern war is that it will make infidels by the million. If infidels would only use their money and their energy to promote Christianity, the Christian religion would be "a dead one" in a very short time, but there is an army of priests and preachers who make elegant livings, without labor, by teaching the Christian superstition, while the infidels are practically using no money and no energy to counteract the influence of the clergy, and a perfect fraud, with endless money and unceasing zeal is holding its own against the greatest truth in the world that has no energy and no money to support it, and in which a paper like this one, one of the only three in the whole of America, is left to struggle for existence all the time.

I saw, at Jerusalem, the Russians, the most depraved and most ignorant looking people I ever saw, their women being far inferior to the Negro women of Kentucky, just arrived in the city, and so bent on getting to the fake tomb of Jesus, in the city—when there was probably his real tomb outside of the city—that they looked neither to the right nor left at anybody or any thing so eager were they to get to that tomb and kiss its rocks, and be present when the holy fire should come down from heaven on Easter, just as it did at Pentecost, and just as it still does every year at Easter, and, in fighting for which fire, a few years ago, to burn themselves and their old dirty clothes still to be worn as tokens and charms, they killed over a hundred of each other a few years ago.

Since I saw those people, in Jerusalem, the most devout Christians on earth, with whom even the Roman Catholics cannot compare, that same class of people, in Russia, have shown their zeal for the Christian religion, by murdering Jews because the Jews do not believe the Christian religion, and exactly like the Jews, the people who wrote the Bible, murdered the Canaanites because they did not believe the Jewish religion—did not believe that God came down from heaven to make covenants on the top of a mountain, half way ground, and there, with his "finger wrote, on two tables of stone, that" are revered among Jews and Christians to this day the ten commandments, some of which are very silly.

Now these Christian Russians have gone to war with the heathen Japanese, the Russians, all the time, calling, in prayer, upon the Christian God to help them, and the Japs doing no praying and asking no assistance of any God, except the wooden gods they made themselves among the lowest orders of the Japs, and yet the Japs, one of the smallest of nations are, all the time, whipping the Russians, the largest nation on earth.

If the conditions were reversed and the Japs were Christians and the Russians were heathens, every pulpit and religious press in Christendom would teem with sermons and editorials showing that God was sustaining his religion against the heathen infidel.

A few days since Mr. Uchida, the Japanese Consul-General to America, was discussing the war with some Americans.

Uchida said that in the naval engagements in which the Japs had whipped the Russians there was evidently human agency, and they could therefore, indicate nothing about any part that the Christian God was taking in the war, but he said that when a great many Russian soldiers were frozen to death, that was evidently, the work of God, with which the Japs had had nothing to do.

The Russians live in the coldest country in the world and the Japs live in a warm country, and yet, in a war between the two, the Russians freeze to death while the Japs do not.

How can any Christian reasonably expect that when Christian missionaries go to Japan, these people will be persuaded that God loves Christians and hates infidels?

The whole world, infidel and Christian, see just alike a more wonderful "prayer gauge" than Professor Tyndall ever proposed, and everybody sees that Christian prayers for a nation do not help it, at all, and yet after all the calamities of this year, the most disastrous in American history, our Christian president will, next Thanksgiving day, call upon us all, infidel, Jew and Christian alike to meet at the churches and thank God for the blessings of this year, and we will, all, still have to pay for chaplains to pray for our army and navy and Congress.

There is only one reason in the

world that the Christian religion is not wiped off the map of the world, in one year, and that is the infidels do not use their money to have it done—as much money as the same number of people would have to pay to the church if they were Christians.

Hazleton, Kans.—Enclosed \$1 for which move my tag up for another year. Mentality is a wonder. oYur best friends wont listen to you if you try to convince them that the Bible is not inspired. In fact they feel insulted. I am rather out-spoken because I have no business interests and think I have a right to express my opinion, even if it does not harmonize with others, although religion is better than it was when I was young. I am 71 years old. I hope to take the Blade as long as I live—MRS. M. A. REYNOLDS.

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